CORNELL poised to take IT service to a new level of maturity with TeamDynamix

Adopting a more mature approach to IT service requires three key aspects working together in harmony: people, processes, and technology.

Cornell University's Central IT division had the first two elements in place, but the third was lacking. Central IT staff wanted to be able to move ahead with initiatives such as enabling self-service and using key performance indicators to improve operations, but the IT service management platform they were using was holding them back.

While the platform included detailed reporting capabilities, these features weren't very accessible or easy to use.

"Our old tool had very sophisticated reporting, but you almost needed programming experience to be able to use it," says Todd Maniscalco, assistant director for customer service and support within Cornell's Central IT division. As a result, team members had to spend a lot of time building and scheduling reports that provided the kind of insight that leaders wanted.

The university also didn't have an easy way to create self-service portals for students, faculty, and staff. Central IT maintained a knowledge base within Drupal, an open-source content management system, but there was no easy way to manage this information.

The university was looking for an IT and enterprise service management platform that was simple to use and included robust self-service capabilities that would allow IT staff to take customer service to a new level of maturity. They found that — and more — in TeamDynamix.

Optimizing the customer experience

Cornell is a largely decentralized institution. Many of the university's organizational units have their own IT departments that support their technology needs. Central IT manages and supports the university's basic IT infrastructure (WiFi and local area networks, phone and email service) and other tools that are used campus-wide.

"We want to make sure we optimize the customer service experience," says Alysia Briggs, program manager for IT service management.

Adopting a self-service approach is one way Cornell aims to do this. Empowering users to find answers to their own questions helps improve service in a few ways: It allows users to receive more timely support than if they have to create a support ticket and wait for a technician to respond to their question. And, it shifts some of the burden off of IT staff, so technicians can provide better service to the customers they do have to help.

With its old IT service management platform, Cornell didn't have an easy way to build customer self-service portals. Using the client portal features of TeamDynamix, the university's individual IT units have been able to set up a system of client portals organized by service categories that are dynamically linked to knowledge base articles related to those categories.

If students or staff can't find the information they need, they can initiate a service request directly from these portals, and their request is forwarded automatically to the appropriate service technician for a response.

What's more, the automated workflows built into the TeamDynamix platform will allow IT staff to manage knowledge base articles more systematically, ensuring that information remains relevant and up to date.

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The platform's intuitive reporting capabilities make it much easier to glean operational insights that will help leaders improve IT service, such as the average time it takes to resolve various kinds of support tickets. Reporting that used to take hours now takes only a few minutes, and anyone who's authorized can run reports without needing any specialized knowledge.

TeamDynamix

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Driving continuous improvement

As part of the next phase of deployment, Central IT plans to incorporate more of the platform's project portfolio management functionality to track and manage IT projects. The division is also leveraging TeamDynamix as part of its continual improvement process. "We're looking to see whether there are workflows we can put into place that will improve service through greater automation," Maniscalco says.

"TeamDynamix has been a great vendor to work with, they are genuine, and we really get the sense that they're listening to our needs, which is refreshing."

Although Central IT can't mandate that other departments follow certain practices, the division is doing what it can to ensure that TeamDynamix is used effectively across the university.

"We set up an advisory committee to share processes and practices that we have found to be effective," Briggs says. "If there are any major incidents that affect multiple units, we coordinate our response to those incidents — and we have gained a lot of efficiencies from this."

TeamDynamix has quickly become an indispensable tool for driving greater IT maturity campus-wide, which was a major goal behind adopting the system. However, a nice side benefit has been the quality of service and support that Cornell has realized in working with TeamDynamix as well.

"TeamDynamix has been a great vendor to work with," Maniscalco concludes. "They are genuine, and we really get the sense that they're listening to our needs, which is refreshing. I have worked with many vendors before, and that's rare." ■

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